The Ten Commandments
applied to modern behavior

By Dr. Frank Crane

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THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Applied to Modern Behavior

By

DR. FRANK CRANE

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THE TEN COMMANDMENTS APPLIED TO MODERN BEHAVIOR

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FOREWORD

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DOCTOR WILL DURANT in a talk the other day said that the young people of this generation differed from the young people of the generation before principally in that they were more audacious.

This not only accounts for the increase of crime but it explains a certain trend of mind.

Young people today are questioning everything. They want to know not only what is commanded but why it is commanded. They ask more questions than ever before.

And now they want to know, among other things, why The Ten Commandments.

It is not enough to say that these are simply authoritative statements and must be accepted because they are commanded, but they want to know why they are commanded in the first place.

Unless you can prove to their reason that they are for the good of mankind they will not remain authoritative.

The present volume is an attempt to show that these Commandments are reasonable and that they are merely the statement of the laws that underlie the fundamental welfare and society.

MOSES

MOSES

A THOUSAND years before Pericles and Socrates, fifteen hundred years before Jesus and Cæsar, and thirty-five hundred years before us, Egypt was the crest of civilization, and in her capital, then the Paris-Athens-London of the world, her emperor's daughter went down to the Nile water to bathe and heard a baby's cry from the bulrushes; it was that voice which was to give law to humankind for all time.

So long ago, yet so close! One hundred generations ago only! One hundred fathers, each thirty-five years of age when he begat his son, could join hands and reach back clear across this episode we call history. One hundred steps from Moses to me! You could get those fathers into a committee room. What they could tell! That they have seen Greece, Rome, Venice and Spain flush and fade; they have seen thrones

green, ripen, and fall; they have seen emperors by dozens, kings by hundreds, dukes by droves; they have seen systems of philosophy come and go, cathedrals rise and crumble, beauty preen and pass, and men, men, men, thick as falling autumn leaves, now scattered in quiet graves, and again drifted in storm-heaped wind rows upon battlefields. Save one, none of all the great men of the past stretches out his dead hand and grips the present as Moses. The systems of law in every civilized country recognize him as founder. Every decent man and woman of Christendom acknowledges his rules of conduct. In all its progress, fluctuation, and continual evolution, humanity has one fixed point; its notion of right and wrong is just where this man put it. He wound up and set the clock of the human conscience. Only one figure in history surpasses him in spiritual empire.

Moses was a Jew, the great grandson of Levi, the great-great grandson

of Jacob, who was the first Israelite, and the great-great-great-great grandson of Abraham, who was the first Hebrew. In China they boast of pedigrees thirty centuries long; the only people that can show anything to equal this are the Jews. They are easily first among aristocrats. Away back in the morning of things they had Moses, David, and Jesus; today they are the foremost bankers of Europe and the leading merchants of America. The proud Jew of this day can look down with contempt upon the Hohenzollerns, the Romanoffs and the Guelphs of Europe, "whose blood has crept through scoundrels since the flood." But to the Egyptians Moses was a slave's son. He was to them as a black baby, born in a Louisiana slave-hut, would have been to the Southern aristocracy in 1850.

Time has a grim humor. The monarchs of Egypt are only known as contemporaries of Moses. The Czar

Nicholas of Russia will be known as the contemporary of Tolstoy.

He had a loving sister and a shrewd mother, which is better than a million dollars. These sharp Hebrew women saved his life, and duped the daughter of Pharaoh into paying the slave mother a wage for giving her breast to her own son. He grew up in the Egyptian court and learned Egyptian wisdom. What that was we can only guess; but if you will read Wendell Phillips's lecture on the Lost Arts, you will be amazed at its probable extent. Egypt was schoolmaster to the philosophers of Greece. All there was of ancient wisdom was taught by her priests. Mr. Brunel, the architect of the Thames tunnel, when asked what he thought of the skill of the Egyptians, said: "There is Pompey's Pillar; it is one hundred feet high, and the capital weighs two thousand pounds. It is something of a feat to hang two thousand pounds at that height in the air, and the few men that can do it

would better discuss Egyptian mechanics. Cement is modern, for the ancients dressed and jointed their stones so closely that in buildings thousands of years old the thin blade of a penknife cannot be forced between them." De Tocqueville says "there is no social question that was not discussed to rags in Egypt." The expanding mind of young Moses devoured this knowledge. Also his young manhood drank full draughts of courtly pleasures and royal ambitions. He grew up a prince and savant among the wonderful people who made the sphinx, the pyramids, and the temples of Karnak and Luxor. And all the while his heart was anchored in the heart of his mother. All the splendor of kings and the lure of princess's beauty could not get him away from her. He remained a Jew.

Moses's life falls into a rhythmic trilogy. Forty years he was a royal courtier, forty years he brooded in the wilderness, forty years he was the leader of his people. He died when the

three-part cycle was fulfilled, a hundred and twenty years old, and "his eye was not dim nor his natural force abated." The key to his character is that his one overmastering passion was justice. The man was justice incarnate. He loved right as other men love themselves. When forty years of age he chanced to see an Egyptian Simon Legree bullying a Hebrew Uncle Tom. Moses remonstrated, and the taskmaster retorted insolently. Then "the meekest man" became angry. When a man who has no temper loses it he is dangerous. When the fight was over the slavedriver lay dead on the sand, and over him stood the mild-mannered court favorite, with bloodshot eyes and balled fists. Perhaps it was the first time he had come face to face with death, the world-old mystery, with its two panders, tyranny and wrong. It was a turning point in his career. The problems of life, death, and duty welled up from the dark recesses of his heart. Blood, blood spilt on the ground, blood

"which is the life," rose up and enveloped his mind like a flame. He looked on his hand, as Lady Macbeth looked on hers, and saw the spot that tears could not wipe out, that awful red which would the seas incarnadine. He fled to the wilderness. He was probably in no danger, but the city, with its conventions, its ancient frauds and established wrongs was choking him. He must have it out with the vast enigma of existence, and he sought the wide desert, and the stars, and all the social silence of the infinite.

Thus did Buddha flee, stepping over the sleeping forms of the dance girls on the floor, turning his face from lust of sense because the lust from the Infinite had found him, never resting until he found wisdom beneath the Bo tree. Thus did Saul of Tarsus; when the truth flashed him blind on the road to Damascus, he too, sought the Arabian silence. Thus did Mohammed. Thus did Jesus. Greatness is matured in stillness.

Alone, unknown, friendless, penniless, our prince sat down, not long after, by a well in the rocky land of Midian. Here a new injustice awaited him. As he was musing he saw the slim daughters of Jethro come to water their flocks. Then he saw barbarous shepherds drive them away in wanton pride of masculine strenth. He arose, and bared his arm, and the villains scampered. Then he waited on the ladies, bringing up the water for them himself. We think all the better of him that he fell in love with one of these girls and married her. Forty years this cultivated prince of Egypt lived a shepherd's life and dwelt in tents. He was learning the most difficult of all arts, the art of being alone. Who shall tell of the long nights under the spangled heavens, eye to eye with the stars in that country where stars were first named, where stars burn so bright in the dry atmosphere that they seem to hang like apples of light close enough to pick; and of the mighty dreams

there, of the stupendous thoughts rolling like constellations through his brain, of the passions and ambitions that swept in week-long hurricanes through his soul there in the still gloom! The written record of his after life is great; how greater would be this unwritten story of his thoughts could we read it.

Man is greater than anything he does. Only God knows how great a man is, for only God knows his dreams. Above the tame landscape of the actual, of that which is done, thunders the blinding majesty of the possible, that which he would have done. If the music Wagner heard in his soul but could not quite catch should be heard, it would break the world's heart. If we could see the works that Michelangelo conceived but could not bring forth, if we could know the philosophic truths that just evaded the grasp of Immanuel Kant, we should have some proper notion of "what a piece of work is

man." Our deeds are a poor compromise between our ideals and our tools.

Perhaps it was during this wilderness retreat that Moses recollected and put in writing the traditions he had heard from his mother, how the great Jehovah had walked and talked with his forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, which same God made the world. In other words, we may suppose that he wrote the Book of Genesis in the tents of Midian. A more magnificent, stately-stepping piece of literature does not exist. Those who contend to and fro about its literalness, its authority, and its creedal value miss its supreme charm. It is poetry. Only three other men in the world ever had its grandeur of style—David, Homer, and Shakespeare. It is poetry. Hence it is truer than any prose, more profoundly true than any mathematic or chemic fact. It begins with a sentence that resembles an eagle's swoop: "In the beginning—God!" I would rather have been the author of that sentence than

to have written all the books in the British Museum.

At the end of his second forty years Moses comes, in some way, to the point where at last the infinite touches him. He tells us of his experience in the form of "The Story of the Burning Bush." Lay aside your criticism, strip off your logic, when you read that story; only those can understand it who read it as a little child would read it. Children see things you have forgotten how to see. The unreal, the invisible, is their populous playground. What to you is a thick cloud mist is to them a bastioned castle, booming with unburning fire, fringed with the ghost of gold. With us education is disillusion, knowledge a continuous slaughter of sweet beliefs, common sense and maturity a desert where once blew the roses of childhood's gentle madness. And moses lived when the world was young. The world is old now; the gods of Greece have left Hymettus, Pan is dead, Paul is an epileptic, Jesus is a

hypnotist, Jehovah a theory. We can explain everything. And when there is no mystery there is—ashes and the sickening of life. The Moses world was young. Then bushes burned, yet were not consumed, and mountain thunder spoke words and seas divided, and pillars of cloud and fire moved in the path of a child-people. And bushes might yet flame with God could eyes be found childlike enough to see. Moses's description of his meeting with God is Oriental; that is, not only poetry written but poetry acted. Whatever one may think of the clothing of the story, its warm core of flesh is that the Infinite rose in trembling dawn upon the man's soul when he was eighty years ripe. And with God came responsibility and the burden of his people. A sure test of having seen God is that one is driven back to humanity and takes the world on his heart. Whoever gets hold of God has to be great from thence forward. God means not happiness but duty, tragedy, the cross, failure here

and triumph yonder, but all so vast, so supreme, that through the tears and contumely and blood glows something which one who knew called "joy unspeakable and full of glory." It is not a nice thing nor a pleasant one to meet God, but it is a great thing.

The wilderness epoch is now over; no more long days of thought, waste weeks of refreshment, fallow months and barren years in which the huge soul is seething, settling, fermenting, "finding itself." Bottom is reached at last. The foot is firm on something sure-God. Beware, O kings, of the wilderness man who has talked with the Infinite! He laughs at your racks and thumbscrews, and scorns your turtled feasts and purple dignities. Beware of such as John the Baptist, who have learned to want nothing, and of such as Moses, who have developed an appetite for galaxies! Kiss them, "lest ye perish in the way, when their wrath is kindled but a little." Moses goes back to Pharaoh and smites him ten times;

blood, frogs, lice, flies, murrain, boils, hail, locusts, darkness, and death. His is a terrible God, as terrible as sin. He must be a terrible God, for he made man, and man is terrible. Let the stupid and surface critic smile at this for a bogey tale. There was one great mind of the nineteenth century that knew how to read his Bible. Abraham Lincoln had Moses and Pharaoh in his mind when he wrote his second inaugural address, the noblest state paper of America:

> "Fondly do we hope and fervently do we pray that this scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled up by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so

still it must be said, "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

Lincoln was of the Moses type; he did not laugh at the strange story of the plagues, he shuddered; he was finding out what it meant; he knew about "The Hounds of God":

The hounds of God across the years
  Are running swift and true;
Far and away they seem to play,
  But they're tracking me and you.

The king is seated on his throne,
  His courtiers stand around him;
They see him start and grasp his heart—
  The hounds of God have found him.

At low midnight the wastrel wakes,
  Afraid upon his bed;
The far-off sounds of the baying hounds
  Are ringing in his head.

The wicked woman wipes her lips,
  And says, "'Tis naught, 'tis naught!"

But the velvet feet of the hounds so fleet
Whisper behind her thought.

They have torn great empires limb from limb,
They have conquered the conquerors,
And their teeth have hurt for sins of dirt
In plagues that are worse than wars.

They have cruelly taken the old man down;
They have bitten the babe at the breast;
For there's never a sin of kith or kin
Can escape their fateful quest.

Before us goes God's angel tall,
Flying upon the wind;
And sweet as dawn he beckons us on—
But the hounds of God are behind!

The Israelites escape. As they run there sounds behind them the wail of stricken Egypt; the cry swells into a howl of rage and vengeance; the imperial armies muster and follow the flying troop of slaves; Moses and his

people stand at last trapped between the war-men behind and the sea before. Then comes the miracle: the waves divide, the Jews pass, the Egyptians are drowned. What shall we think of this story? It is not history! It is greater than history. It is what history ought to be.

Then the emigrants wander forty years in the rocks and sand. Up and down they march and countermarch and get nowhere. Their leader is drilling, kneading, hardening the stock which is to outlast all other breeds. There is the accompaniment of wonder always, cloud pillar and fire pillar, manna and quail divinely sent, and bitter waters made sweet. These people are not "Fortyniners" going for gold, from whom in time shall spring a graft-cursed San Francisco; these are they who are beginning to produce a race that can bear a David who shall sing for humanity, and a Jesus who shall transform the world. Moses never gets a nice, grassy plot for his

house, with geraniums around the porch, and a vine over the window. The last forty years of his life he has to traipse about in as God-forsaken a section of the planet as one can find. The desert tribes fight him, his own people snarl at him, but he never falters. What a stout old heart! He goes right forward, perfecting his tabernacle ritual which shall keep his people from relapsing into barbarism, giving out his rules and regulations which shall keep them clean and strong and just, and writing his account of how the world was made by the God who was the particular Friend of their father Abraham, which account shall be deep roots in the past to make their family tree eternal. He goes up into smoking Sinai and has a conversation with the thunder and lightning. What did they say to him! He shows us when he comes down. There on a stone slab are graved the Ten Commandments. Whether he really spoke with God, or whether he had a hypnotic fit up there

in the thunderstorm, the fact remains that in some way he got hold of the toughest, most everlasting and fireproof bundle of truths any son of man ever found. Nobody ever argues with those Ten Words. They certainly have the smell of thunder about them. When they roar down into the caverns of the soul we know they are as true as ourselves. Philosophers and sensualists, wise men and fools, have gnawed at these same tables of stone, but they stand clear; no substitute has ever been allowed, no amendment has received a respectable vote.

Moses was a good deal concerned about Jehovah. He has given us the best name for God. At the burning bush he asks the Infinite, "When the people ask me, Who sent you? what shall I say?" and the answer comes, "Say that I AM hath sent you." I AM —the great Self-existing, the supreme Personality—Herbert Spencer never got any further than that.

If an angel were to ask us what we want most, what would we answer? It is a penetrating question and reveals character. For our real creed, as Ruskin says, is not what we think, but what we want most, deep in the heart of us. Once God's voice, speaking as a friend, requests of Moses what he most desires. Ponder well the reply: "That I may see thy Face!" He would rather have the vision than sit on a throne. He was the original Sir Galahad. With a want like that a man could step joyfully into eternity. When his time comes to die he gathers his people together and gives them his parting advice and warning. Then he sings a song. Such an epic life must close with a song. If you would see him as he sings, go into the Church of San Pietro in Vincoli at Rome. The most titanic genius among sculptors turned to Moses when he made his masterpiece. In Michelangelo's statue you will find the best commentary on the Bible story.

Look at this carven figure, breathing force and mastery, with a sad but divine light upon the features, and you will see what grandeur, vitality, and simplicity is in man; you will see what Eugene Guillaume calls "the calm energy of an exalted faith." His song concluded, he wraps his mantle around him and goes away. None dare follow him. The hushed multitude watch him as he recedes toward the mountain. Their gaze follows his diminishing figure as he climbs the steep. He disappears, he emerges again, still mounting solitary. He becomes a mere speck upon the white stone. At last he is gone—forever! The Bible says:

> So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-poer; but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.

Instead of, "So Moses died according to the word of the Lord," a more literal translation and a more suggestive, is, "So Moses died on the mouth of the Lord." God kissed him, and he died. Sir Galahad saw the Cup at last. His friend, the Infinite, answered his prayer and let him see His glory, which no man can see and live. Perhaps it was in some sheltered ravine the glory came, at first rosy as morning, then growing, pulsing, insufferably brighter and sweeter, until his

> heart was like a nest of singing
> birds
> Rocked on the topmost bough
> of life.

and he swooned, and when he awoke it was to the fragrance of the white rose of paradise. He never entered the promised land. He was not to be satisfied here. Only "the angel with the darker drink," death only, held the cup that could sate the thirst of so great a soul. He found a better coun-

try, that "sweet and blessed country, conjubilant with song." More than a thousand years later we get another glimpse of him. John, the Seer, saw heaven open, and heard the angels singing, and they sang "the song of Moses and of the Lamb." What a man he must have been, even among the blessed dead, to have his name to be the one of all names linked in seraphic anthems with the Name of names!

His friend, God, buried him. No man was worthy to attend his funeral. In a cleft of the rock Gabriel and Raphael laid him. Through the tall pines, along the wild passes, came the procession of tall white angels, each *"bianco vestita e nella faccia quale par tremolando matutina stella."* [1]

He came from God,
He went back to God,
And there was no gap of death in his life.

[1] Clothed in white, and in the face what seemed a trembling morning star.—DANTE.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS APPLIED TO MODERN BEHAVIOR

By Dr. Frank Crane

In vain we call old notions fudge
And bend our conscience to our dealing;
The Ten Commandments will not budge
And stealing will continue stealing.

Lowell.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS APPLIED TO MODERN BEHAVIOR

THE Ten Commandments are the most important words of history.

They were given by Moses to the Jews, but they have been generally accepted throughout Christendom as the foundation of all law and morals.

They are the basis of society in the civilized world.

That there is need for all to know them and to keep them in mind is generally accepted, for they are the basis of our commerce as well as our society. Unless mankind generally held to them chaos would ensue. They are generally accepted as uttering the normal conscience of the world.

Sometime ago a film was made of the Ten Commandments which proved very popular, showing that the public was interested in them.

Still later a religious paper declared that the people of the United States did not know the Commandments well enough to use them.

One person who was examined said that one Commandment was, "There must be no false faces before me," and another, "Keep away from your neighbor's wife." One in Buffalo, Illinois, when asked if he knew what the Ten Commandments were, replied, "Sure! it was a swell picture." And a college girl in Sioux City, Iowa, started quoting the Beatitudes. Various other wrong answers were given.

Perhaps it might not be out of place, therefore, to polish up a little bit on what the Commandments are and to inquire why they are.

They have their roots deep in human nature. They existed before Moses. Moses only uttered them. They are the most authoritative statement of the conscience of the world.

In simple and plain language these ten articles that follow propose to ex-

plain what the Ten Commandments are. The matter is not out of date. These laws are in force today as much as they ever were.

There is no other instance in history where a rule has been recognized and obeyed by the mass of the most intelligent people for over three thousand years. They are not merely religious teachings inculcated by the church but they operate outside as well as inside the church. They lay their restraining hand on every human being.

They function in the home, the market, the street and the office. They hold in the wild places of the earth and in the farthest seas.

They speak and they are obeyed or defied, wherever there is a human creature.

They are just as true on Monday as on Sunday, and are as binding in a meeting of bank directors or a labor union as they are in the temple.

Their rewards and punishments fall as accurately in a cabaret as in a prayer

meeting, in the slums as in a court house, in a den of thieves as in a Sunday School.

No crook was ever shrewd enough to evade them in the long run, no monarch great enough to ignore them, no millionaire rich enough to buy exemption from them, no army powerful enough to escape the penalty of violating them, and no poor man obscure enough to elude them.

You can no more dodge them than you can get away from the law of gravitation.

They were true in the days of Adam, long before Moses spoke them, and they will be true in the day of Judgement. They do not depend upon faith for they operate whether you believe them or not. They are as indifferent as the sunrise to what you think.

They carry your destiny and determine your fate with as much precision as the rise and fall of the tide. They are as inevitable as the precession of the equinoxes. Upon them all law is

founded and the most rudimentary prudence demands that we should understand them. Dean Inge said the other day:

> "The younger generation are impatient of traditional views. They want first-hand experience and original thought. They will listen eagerly and respectfully when anyone speaks to them from his heart. They don't, at least the best of them, care much to hear what the church teaches or what the Bible says.
>
> "The fences erected by traditional propriety, and respect for the established order are everywhere being broken down. There are new social types emerging, such as the well-educated, self-supporting young woman.
>
> "For the first time in European history a generation is growing up, keen-witted and ambitious, a generation which

> has not been nursed and educated in the Hebrew and classical tradition. These are people to whom Greek philosophy and Roman order and law and Palestinian religion mean very little."

This is good expression of the mind of youth today. They want to know *why*. They are not satisfied with authority. The present attempt tries to give them the reason in nature that lies behind the Ten Commandments.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

"THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME."

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

"THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME."

WHAT we want to know is what this Commandment means to us and not what it meant to people of other ages. In time past much of the conflict between tribes was a conflict for their different gods. In the Old Testament there is war between the God of the Jews and the God of the Philistines and the God of the Amalekites, and so on.

This Commandment to the people of those days may have meant that they were to be loyal to their own tribal Deity and not to worship strange gods. This meaning has entirely disappeared, as nowadays it is generally recognized that there is one God behind all the various representatives of Him and the bitterness of religious warfare has abated.

The Commandment, therefore, to us does not mean that we are to be loyal to the Christian as against the Mohammedan God or as against the God of the Buddhist. All thoughtful men recognize that God is the same whether he is called Jehovah, Jove or Lord. The gist of this commandment is for you and me that we must have one standard of right and wrong and we must not have two.

In the parliament of the mind there may be much arguing back and forth. We may listen to various impulses and be subjected to varied desires, but the one force within us to which we must all yield supreme obesiance is the force implied in the word *ought*.

Somehow or other in this word ought there is the authority of God to every man. Every man has his notion of right and wrong. He is under obligations to do right always at every time.

Just what this force of conscience is, of what the power and authority in the

word ought consists of has never been determined. But for that matter we do not know what force is. We do not know what gravitation is, nor electricity, nor life. We acknowledge all these forces and can use them but we cannot tell their essence, whence they come nor whither they go.

So it is with conscience. In every man, even the wickedest, there is a sense of right and of wrong. He may or may not obey this sense but he has it. It is one of the great natural forces of nature among souls.

Emerson says, "When God has a point to carry with the race he plants the arguments in the instincts."

We know that it is wrong to lie, to steal and to murder, or to envy, not because we reason these things out and perceive the harm they do but because there is an instinctive feeling in us that condemns them. Sometimes it seems to us that to lie or to murder will produce good results. But always this force within us protests.

We might call the operation of this force the wisdom of the cosmos as opposed to our individual wisdom. The meaning of the Commandment is that we should obey the cosmic wisdom instead of our own.

To do a thing, therefore, because we think it is expedient or rational or profitable when our conscience protests against it is violating this first commandment.

That we should have no other gods but one means that we should listen to no other authoritative voice in us but one. A man following other counsels such as profit or expediency is going against "the accrued caution of foregoing generations," as Huxley calls it. He is braving the power of the cosmos. We might say the stars in their courses fight against him. Sooner or later he will come to grief.

We break this Commandment then whenever we prefer some other motive above our sense of right.

Human society is a solidarity because this sense of right is pretty much the same in every man. It is the great policeman of the world. New York or London is not safe because of the thin, blue line of policemen that stand between law-abiding citizens and criminals. It is not safe because of the Army and Navy of the nation.

If every citizen of the great city were vicious and followed some other motive than the impulse to do right that city would be a heap of ruins before the end of the week. No force could prevent it.

This conscience within us holds back the knife of the assassin, restrains our evil lusts, greeds and angers and protects the weak.

This force is the basis of business. All trade is founded upon the fact that most men keep their word. If they did not do this no laws nor policemen could control them. The vast system of credit that exists throughout the commercial

world would dissolve unless the average man told the truth.

Whoever by his words or his example weakens the authority of conscience, explains it away or brings it into ridicule, has violated this first commandment and he is an enemy to the human race.

All wrong actions commence in breaking this Commandment. The cheat, the liar, the seducer, the grafter and all scoundrels begin by trying to say, "There is no harm in that."

But there is more wisdom in the blush upon the maiden's cheek than in all the laws upon the statute books. One is the instinctive protest of the God within us and the other is a fiction of mankind.

We see therefore that this first commandment is not a mere concoction of some tyrant but is founded upon reasons of human welfare.

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

"THOU SHALT NOT MAKE UNTO THEE ANY GRAVEN IMAGE—THOU SHALT NOT BOW DOWN THYSELF TO THEM NOR SERVE THEM."

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

"THOU SHALT NOT MAKE UNTO THEE ANY GRAVEN IMAGE—THOU SHALT NOT BOW DOWN THYSELF TO THEM NOR SERVE THEM."

THIS is the Commandment against idolatry.

Like some of the others it seems antiquated. We do not worship idols. Why warn folks against idolatry when few are in danger of any such thing?

Idolatry, however, the gist of it, consists in making some representation, some outward form to embody this idea of the invisible God and we are warned against so doing.

Such outward forms today are apparently good. They become dangerous when they become daily substitutes for God. Their dictates and the dictates of God through our conscience do not sometimes jibe.

A peculiar notion has existed in the world for which Machiavelli is prob-

ably responsible. Its modern interpretation is "My country right or wrong but still my country."

Machiavelli claimed that the State was not bound by the same moral obligations as an individual and it was justified in resorting to any kind of injustice in order to preserve itself.

This is tantamount to making "a graven image" or idol of the State and elevating it above God. It is idolatry and therefore it is false. Any State that does an injustice is liable to be punished, therefore, as an individual. What a man cannot do individually he is not permitted to do collectively.

Very often we take refuge behind a conception of our own manufacture and obey its dictates, or the dictates we impute to it, before those of God.

Men sometimes do wrong because such wrong happens to be the custom of society. They do wrong because it is sanctioned by law or they do wrong because of expediency or profit.

This is equal to making for ourselves an artificial somewhat, that takes the place of God. We are dethroning God and setting up some simulacrum in His place. Any man who does this is guilty of idolatry.

There is only one rule in the world and that is that we must do right and whoever does right knows that the cosmos or the whole universe of men and things is behind him. He is right even when he stands alone and is safest when he has the courage of his convictions.

No matter how respectable the authority, it has no right to usurp the place of our conscience. Sometimes this results in tragedy and even in loss but it is our duty none the less.

As a rule it is safer to follow one's convictions no matter where they may lead him than it is to follow the dictates of any other authority.

The Church itself has no right to stand between us and God. That Church is to be listened to only when

we believe that its dictates harmonize with those of an intelligent conscience.

The future is in the hands of those who stand squarely upon their own feet conscious of the approval of the God within them. Whoever follows any other God than this inward revelation, no matter how respectable or how authoritative that God may be, is sure to have his efforts come to naught.

One reason why the name of Abraham Lincoln will live forever is because he did right "as God gave him to see the right," whereas the fame of such as Napoleon and Cæsar has decayed because they followed the dictates of some egotistic conception rather than obeyed their conviction of the truth.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

"THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD THY GOD IN VAIN."

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

"THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD THY GOD IN VAIN."

THIS is the Commandment to decency.

We cannot all be brilliant, nor wise, nor witty but at least we can all be decent, if we will.

This Commandment, like the others, has for its object the making the most of one's life.

Reverence, in particular, is essential if we are to preserve in the human race its finer qualities.

There is no beauty, no nobleness, in one who reveres nothing. He is like the child who wantonly breaks the costly china and mars the polished furniture. He is like a savage who knows nothing to do with a piano but to chop it up to make a fire.

Humanity ought to be good for something else than the material things of life. We all feel that we ought to be

occupied with something better than tilling the soil or washing the dishes or sweeping the floor. We want to qualify for higher things and live a more considerable kind of life than the mere material one.

Unless we treat this God sense within us with respect and listen to its promptings as to one having authority and implicitly obey its orders, we slump from man to animal, from a divine nature to a brutish one.

There is something of the beast in all of us and something of the angel. Those have the right idea who want to keep these things in their proper relationship and order. Making the most of life depends upon order. This God sense is the highest thing within us and the man who profanes it in himself is as one who brings the garbage pail into the parlor.

His life slumps. His thought and feeling become slovenly.

He is vulgar, for the vulgar man is the one who dishonors and desecrates himself.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

We live in an age of Smart Alecks. Literature is crowded with small souls who are mad for conspicuity. In our craze for publicity and attention we seek to attract vandalism. So the mountebanks perk their poor fragment of sense into a shocking epigram.

The spirit of today tends to profanity.

Profanity is an evidence of a limited vocabulary. It is the gesture of the weak. Even if you want to hurt a man you can do the job better by speaking to him or of her in restrained language of force rather than in shocking words.

Lightness is good, and laughter. Ridicule has its uses, but to give ourselves over to cynicism and to dance upon our mother's grave to gain a snigger is to destroy in childishness whatever adult-mindedness and poise we have gained.

It is well to be witty. It is better to be a gentleman.

There are still places where the quip is silent, where one bows the head and where we take off our hats.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

This is the sanitary Commandment. It is a prohibition of moral dirt. It is a reminder that a human being is something very wonderful and divine. We are temples. We are not pig styes nor bar rooms.

The profane man dishonors himself.

A man who knows nothing to reverence cannot respect himself. Unless we see some beauty and glory in the world about us we shall see none in ourselves.

All the best the human mind has conceived or dreamed or hoped to be is concealed in this word within us—God. We have other things to play with, let us leave that alone.

Break down respect for that and you open the way to disregard all order and to condemn all law.

We would not tolerate that the hooligans should tear down the flag of our nation and trample it in the mud. God is the flag of humanity, of its most sacred hopes and finest aspirations. Let us respect it.

Above all things let us be decent. This is what this Commandment means.

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

"REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY TO KEEP IT HOLY."

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

"REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY TO KEEP IT HOLY."

THE rational view of all the Commandments is that they are intended to help man in his evolutionary struggle upward. There is enough to drag us down. Whoever furnishes anything to help us up really serves his fellow men.

The gist of this Commandment is that one day in seven is to be different from the other days, set apart, devoted exclusively to serious thought.

What day one selects is immaterial. The point is that it should be one day in seven. Those who urge that it should be Saturday instead of Sunday and the difference in the rest day between the Jews and the Christians is about something that does not matter. The point is there should be a periodical day of retirement from business.

The Commandment was not intended to rivet the chains of the Church upon the individual, to increase the authority of the priesthood.

Its purpose is not artificial. It is not a whimsical and arbitrary rule. It is founded in human nature and intended as all the other Commandments to develop and benefit the race. The struggle for bread among us and the great game of getting on are so apt to be absorbing that we are commanded to stop, think and rest one day in seven that we may get properly orientated with the universe.

The Commandment is especially for the benefit of the common laborer. It may be called the Magna Charta of labor.

It has done more to benefit the toilers of the world than all the laws, labor unions and welfare work of men.

Because it has implanted in the conscience and in the religious feeling a sense of obligation to pause and rest at regular intervals, and when we can

transfer an obligation from the reason over to the instincts we have rooted it much more firmly.

This Commandment is one of the fundamentals of culture, for culture has been defined by Joubert as, "whatever transfers our satisfactions away from the body and over to the mind."

The religious feeling has been often twisted and debased and has prevented culture. It has been sometimes used by the crafty and mistaken to keep people in ignorance and brutality.

Rightly understood this Commandment tends to make us healthier, more intelligent, free and just. Just how we should observe this Sabbath day, whether we should devote it wholly to religious exercise or include recreation is a matter of dispute.

We should use our common sense and observe the Sabbath in the way that best fits our circumstances, keeping always in mind that it is the essence of the Commandment that once in seven days our program of activities be

broken and the day used for the cultivation of our higher self.

There is a wholesome democracy about this Commandment. Culture has been sometimes called the product of leisure and certain people are supposed to live off of the workers, culture being the peculiar property of the loafers.

This Commandment makes it incumbent upon all people to rest one day out of seven. Thus it gives the poor an opportunity for culture as well as the rich and does not compel the poor to work while the rich enjoy leisure.

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

"HONOR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER" (THAT THY DAYS MAY BE LONG UPON THE LAND WHICH THY GOD GIVETH THEE.)

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

"HONOR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER" (THAT THY DAYS MAY BE LONG UPON THE LAND WHICH THY GOD GIVETH THEE.)

THIS has been called the first Commandment with promise.

We are not told that honoring one's father and mother secures us eternal bliss in Heaven but we are reminded that so doing is one of the best insurances of a long life here.

As a rule, one's parents are one's best friends. They may be mistaken and narrow but they have our best interests at heart.

There may be exceptions to this rule and those exceptions have been played up and made much of. But after all it is doubtful if they alter the general principle.

The hope of the race is its progress. There can be no progress unless the

sons utilize the gains their fathers have made.

The bee builds the same kind of cells now that bees built in the Garden of Eden and beavers make the same kind of dams, and do it in the same way they did in Noah's day. There is no progress in the animal world outside of man. That world goes round and round in a circle.

The child of an animal commences just where his father did and goes over the same territory. Progress with him is like a wheel with a fixed axis. It merely turns around but does not get anywhere.

Mankind, on the contrary, advances because sons commence where their fathers left off.

How much advantage today do we owe to dead men!

There would be no electricity, no steam and none of the other examples of the utilization of the vast natural forces did not the men of today utilize

the discoveries of the dead men of yesterday.

We honor the preceding generation when we make use of their discoveries and the results of them and go on farther.

Here is a letter, written by an old man to his long dead father. It may serve to throw some light upon this commandment.

"Dear Dad:

"I am writing this to you, though you have been dead thirty years.

"From your seat in the Place Beyond I hope you can see these lines. I feel I must say something to you, things I didn't know when I was a boy in your house, and things I was too stupid to say.

"It's only now, after passing through the long, hard school of years, only now, when my own hair is gray, that I understand how you felt.

"I must have been a bitter trial to you. I was such an ass. I believed my own petty wisdom, and I know now how ridiculous it was, compared to that calm, ripe, wholesome wisdom of yours.

"Most of all, I want to confess my worst sin against you. It was the feeling I had that you 'did not understand.'

"When I look back over it now, I know that you did understand. You understood me better than I did myself. Your wisdom flowed around mine like the ocean around an island.

"And how patient you were with me! How full of long suffering, and kindness!

"And how pathetic, it now comes home to me, were your efforts to get close to me, to win my confidence, to be my pal!

"I wouldn't let you. I couldn't. What was it held me aloof? I don't know. But it is tragic—that wall that arises be-

tween a boy and his father, and their frantic attempts to see through it and climb over it.

"I wish you were here now, across the table from me, just for an hour, so that I could tell you how there's no wall any more; I understand you now, Dad, and, God! how I love you, and wish I could go back and be your boy again.

"I know now how I could make you happy every day. I know how you felt.

"Well, it won't be long, Dad, till I am over, and I believe you'll be the first one to take me by the hand and help me up the further slope.

"And I'll put in the first thousand years or so making you realize that not one pang or yearning you spent on me was wasted.

"It took a good many years for this prodigal son—and all sons are in a measure prodigal—

to come to himself, but I've come, I see it all now.

"I know that the richest, most priceless thing on earth, and the thing least understood, is that mighty love and tenderness and craving to help which a father feels toward his boy.

"For I have a boy of my own.

"And it is he that makes me want to go back to you, and get down on my knees to you.

"Up there somewhere in the Silence, hear me, Dad, and believe me."

This Commandment, therefore, is reminding us of the principle of human progress. It is the Commandment of social evolution. It has as its corollary that

"Sweeter shall the roses blow
In those far years, those happier years,
And children weep when we lie low,
Far fewer tears, far softer tears."

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

"THOU SHALT NOT KILL."

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

"THOU SHALT NOT KILL."

THIS Commandment is one of the briefest of the ten. It needs no enlargement nor specification. Every one knows what killing means.

Some of the eastern people obey a law that forbids them to take any kind of life whether of man or other animal.

Development in the microscopical field, however, shows that this is impossible. The water we drink is full of infusoria and the air we breathe often contains living organisms.

No man could exist unless in some way he made use of, for assimilable purposes, other forms of life. Whatever may be the outcome of the dispute between the vegetarians and the meat eaters, mankind at present subsists largely upon meat food.

The law of nature is that one form of animal life shall live upon others,

and some animals are constructed with manifest carnivorous impulses and instincts.

But this Commandment emphasizes the sanctity of human life. Upon it all law against murder is based.

We have a feeling that a man's most precious possession is his right to exist. Self defense is the first law of nature. Whoso takes a man's life takes away that which is of more value than all his property or reputation.

For while there is life there is still hope. No matter how wrecked may be one's concerns so long as he still lives he may entertain hopes of bettering his affairs. But when life is gone all hope is gone.

We speak about the end of the world, and there have been various scares entertained by people who feared the advent of general chaos and the day of judgment. But as far as the individual is concerned, the end of the world and its interests for him takes place at his

death. As far as we know he has no more concern with terrestrial affairs.

It reminds us of what Pastor Wagner calls the fundamental creed of humanity, the belief in life.

There is no instinct so strong in man as self preservation. With the poet we may say:

> "Gnaw my withers, wrack my bones,
> Life, mere life, for all atones."

This instinct must have been put in us for some good reason and we do well when we try to conserve it. We have a feeling that in some way a suicide has made a mistake. It never pays to give up. We do not know what the future has in store for us. It may be a remarkable recovery from our ills. It may be some turn of fortune that shall restore us again to prosperity.

Life may be a venture but no man wants to throw it away recklessly. It is doubtful whether the State even has a right to exact the extreme penalty of capital punishment. Many serious

minds have held that capital punishment does not decrease crime. Certainly all of our advances in modern civilization have been in the direction of curing, not of punishing.

This Commandment rests upon a sound instinct of humanity. It emphasizes and endorses it.

Like the other Commandments, it is simply an utterance that endorses the primal instincts of the race.

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

"THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY."

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

"THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY."

THE object of this Commandment is the health and purity of the race.

The trouble with promiscuity, that is, one trouble with it, is that it brings all sorts of disease in its turn. Morality is not only good for the soul but it is good for the body. As a rule, perfect morals and perfect health go hand in hand.

This is the Commandment for monogamy. Monogamy was not invented by the church, and is not an effort of narrowminded people to coerce those that are broadminded. It is simply the natural evolution of the law of the natural instincts. Like every good law monogamy is the expression of approved custom. It grew. It was not manufactured.

It was not foisted upon the younger generation by the old and bloodless

people who have control of things. Those who are in favor of monogamy are the young people.

Any one who is truly in love is monogamic.

A man who truly loves a woman does not merely want to share with others in her affection, but he wants to monopolize her affections.

A woman who truly loves a man objects to other women loving him.

Bulwer says somewhere that when a man is really in love with a woman all other women are a little distasteful.

The best romances are not about love in general, that is, the promiscuous commingling of the sexes, but they are about true love.

Almost all the songs about love are about, "You, only you."

This romantic instinct, this mating motive that springs up in the hearts of young people, is the foundation of monogamy.

There is a better reason for a man sticking to his wife all his life than

that the law commands it. He does not choose to violate his marriage vows because he is afraid of the penalties of the law. The explanation is much simpler. He sticks to one woman because he likes it, and there is no use arguing against anything that the human race likes.

Like is a stronger word than law, and eventually it will have its way. The man who is faithful to one woman really has a better time and gets more fun out of life than the gay Lothario.

It often seems that this is doubtful and much is made of the joys of promiscuity, but the greater joy is that of loyalty.

Monogamy merely persists because the young people demand it.

It is the best way of regulating the sex impulse.

H. G. Wells says there are two great problems before humanity. They are sex and God.

Much has been written about how to regulate the sex motive, but the best

means for managing that motive, for giving proper outlet to human desires and at the same time retaining our best ideals, is monogamy.

We have tried everything else, promiscuity, pologamy, concubinage, and they have all broken down. They invariably debase man and make a slave of woman.

Monogamy furnishes the best basis for the equality and development of the woman.

Of course there are mistakes and mismates among people. Monogamy breaks down in particular cases because we are human. But it does not break down because of the weakness of the institution but rather because of the weakness of human nature.

Often it is unpleasant and even immoral for two people to go on living together as man and wife when all affection has ceased, but these exceptions do not alter the general rule that the monogamic relation is sounder and healthier than any other.

Every Commandment, if it is sound, must be based upon the way to give play to the instincts and at the same time prevent them from injuring other people or one's self.

Civilization has demonstrated that the union of one man and one woman exclusively is the best and healthiest mode of living.

There is no truth in the assertion that the sex impulse is wicked.

It is not wicked and it is nature's way of propagating the race, and nature is more particular in perpetuating the race than it is in preserving the life of the individual.

Just as the law against murder rests upon the instinct of self preservation so the law against sex immorality rests upon the instinct for the perpetuation of the race.

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

"THOU SHALT NOT STEAL."

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

"THOU SHALT NOT STEAL."

ALL the contractual and complicated fabric of commerce rests upon our disposition to respect the property rights of others.

Truth is not merely a Sunday School virtue lauded by goody-goody people but it is the absolute basis of all credit. Credit men are employed by many concerns simply to estimate their customers' truth-telling rating.

The whole organized fabric of society would dissolve and break up if we did not respect one another's rights.

This right to one's own property is instinctive and justifiable.

Communism or socialism has no basis in the instincts. It is purely artificial and theoretical and is not adaptable to a condition of social progress.

We have the feeling that one has a right to his own land, his own house,

his own money, and his own belongings generally.

Communism cuts the nerve of progress. Mankind is so formed that people will not work unless they can peaceably enjoy the fruits of their labors.

This Commandment, therefore, is designed to furnish the basis of stability for human endeavor. Its aim is to make every man see that what he produces shall be his own.

We have only to imagine a system under which any man would have a right to another man's property to picture a scene of general chaos.

This system of private ownership has been called capitalism and this term carries with it a sense of opprobrium.

But facts have a way of overturning theories. You may take the United States, which is distinctly a capitalistic country on the one hand, and Russia, which is distinctly a communistic on the other, and put the prosperity of one against the poverty of the other.

The State may have a right to take over a portion of all our property, that is, it may have the right of taxation of one kind or another, but it has no right to confiscate our property; if it did, no man would work to accumulate it.

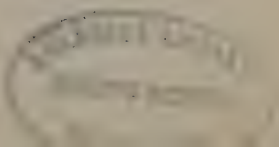
This law, therefore, upholds man in his legitimate possessions.

It says to others that they may not interfere with them nor take them away unjustly.

This gives stability and permanence to social growth.

This Commandment like others, therefore, is based upon the human instincts and makes for the welfare of the race.

It is not something artificial and whimsical imposed upon us but is the expression of our own sense of what is right.



THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

"THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST THY NEIGHBOR."

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

"THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST THY NEIGHBOR."

THIS Commandment depends upon a point which is most necessary to human society.

Not only all of our social peace but our whole commercial fabric depends upon the reliability of men.

Time was when an advertiser could promise anything and he took no pains to keep his promise, but now there is a universal emphasis upon the necessity of truth in advertising.

Truth is the foundation of good will and underlies all reliability. No man can hope to build up his business career except upon the basis of personal integrity.

Not only is a liar in danger of the law but he wins the distrust of all people, and this distrust reacts upon his business success.

All business rests upon the belief that a man's word is as good as his bond and that he ought to live up strictly to what he promises.

A bond or contract is not worth much when a professional liar has made it.

Somehow he will manage to wriggle out of his engagements.

Think what truthfulness means. Without loyalty there could be no credit exchange and no contracts entered into, for one could not be sure and could not make his arrangements accordingly if the other did not perform what he promised to do.

Every liar, therefore, is a social enemy, capable of disturbing not only the business world but of making all sorts of trouble in the social world.

Our first duty is to find out, as near as we can, what is the truth and to stick to that, for when one is faithful to the truth he is in line with the cosmic forces, while one who puts expediency or profit or his own judgment above

the truth he will find that "the stars in their courses fight against him."

Whatever God may be He is certainly the God of truth, and no man is godlike or entitled to be called religious except he adheres to the truth.

The maxim that the end justifies the means transfers the rule of this world from the wisdom of God to the judgment of men and makes our reason the ultimate criterion of things instead of the wisdom of the diety.

Human wisdom at best is fallible and we are all liable to err.

When we get hold of a law of nature or a fact we are standing on the will of God which is perfect and changes not.

This Commandment, therefore, points out the way to success and is for our good, for no one can permanently succeed who does not base his career upon faithful adherence to the truth.

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

"THOU SHALT NOT COVET"

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

"THOU SHALT NOT COVET"

THIS Commandment is aimed at the meanest passion in the human breast. It is one the working out of which causes more misery than almost any other.

It is that feeling we have of wretchedness at another's success. De Rochefoucald capsuled this into a cynical paragraph when he said that:

> "There is something displeasing to all of us in another's success."

In this struggle of life it is pretty hard to avoid feeling disappointment and chagrin when we find another has gotten the prize for which we strove.

But it should be remembered that all cannot win any more than that all the trees in the forest cannot be the

highest, and that man alone should be called rightminded who is not disturbed over another's success.

We should all be ambitious and it is right to work and struggle for such prizes as may be before us. But the element of goodness is in the heart of only a good loser. Everybody loves a good winner and we are all lavish in our praise for one who has come out successful, but the greatest character is displayed by those who lose gracefully, who do not let their losses embitter them.

Many social and political programs are merely organized envy.

We rejoice in any legislation that is aimed at the rich and powerful. We roll as a sweet morsel under our tongue any scandal about those who are famous. There is something in us that loves to see a popular idol dragged down.

Sad to say, envy is one of the most persistent emotions in the human breast and one of the meanest.

In a way, it is at the root of all other kinds of evil, for if no man coveted what another man possessed there would be no theft, nor fraud nor robbery.

This Commandment, therefore, with the others, is intended to root the weeds out of the human heart.

We are to work hard to better our own condition and we are justified in winning as much of this world's goods as we can. But we are to regard leniently and sympathetically the successes of others.

How much of the trouble in the business world, how much of the bitterness of politics, how much of the rebellious spirit in nations is due merely to one section coveting what the other section has!

No friendship is possible as a cotenant of the human bosom with envy.

Friendship implies generosity and nobleness of mind and democracy is said to be "organized friendship."

This feeling of envy or covetness, how much trouble it has caused in families, in churches, in lodges and in all sorts of organizations not to mention nations!

Let us recognize it for the serpent it is. Let us not give it high sounding names but see in it the enemy to human happiness and human progress.

A SUMMARY

A SUMMARY

ONE of the greatest teachers in the world has summed up the gist of the whole Ten Commandments. He has shown us that the keeping of them is not like keeping some other rules; it does not depend upon mental agility or watchfulness but can be made a matter of instinct.

If one's instincts are correct the keeping of the Ten Commandments will follow as a matter of course. This teacher said that the whole of the Ten Commandments could be comprised in the two commandments:

"Love God and Love your neighbor as yourself."

If a man loves God he will naturally not take his name in vain nor set up idols in his stead.

If a man loves his fellow man he will not lie, steal, commit adultery nor envy.

To those therefore whose lives are trued by the right kind of love, there are no Commandments.

To walk circumspectly therefore and to avoid violating the divine law one needs only to take care that he is always actuated by the sentiment of love.

The great Commandment breakers are, hate, selfishness and greed.

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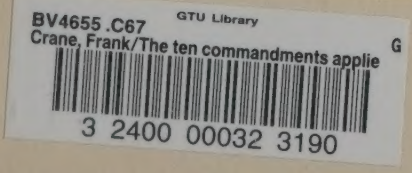

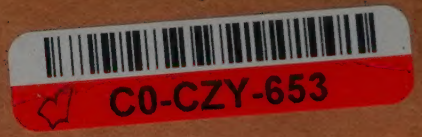
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